

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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O P 241400Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO AMEMBASSY ROME IMMEDIATE

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0000

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 0553

EXDIS

ROME PLEASE PASS SENATOR PERCY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IS

SUBJ: SENATOR PERCY'S MEETING WITH DEFMIN PERES

REF: TEL AVIV 532

TEL AVIV 541

1. DEFMIN AND MRS PERES HOSTED DINNER AT HIS HOME FOR SENATOR PERCY JAN 23. ALSO PRESENT WERE TRANSPORT MINISTER YAACOBI, FORMER AIR FORCE CHIEF GENERAL HOD, IDF INTELLIGENCE CHIEF SHLOMO GAZIT, EPPIE EVRON (MFA), MESSRS MEISSNER AND FENTRES, MS ABELMAN AND POL COUNSELOR.

2. IN COURSE OF SEVERAL HOURS OF CONVERSATION, SENATOR EXPRESSED VIEWS EARLIER MADE IN MEETING WITH FONMIN ALLON(REFTELS), EMPHASIZING URGENCY OF SITUATION, HIS BACKING OF PRESIDENT AND SECRETARY'S EFFORTS TO SEIZE CURRENT FAVORABLE SITUATION TO MAKE PROGRESS IN NEGOTIATIONS, HIS PERSONAL BELIEF THAT PRESENT ARAB LEADERSHIP SINCERELY DESIRED THIS END AND HIS CONVICTION THAT US CONGRESS WOULD NOT STAND BEHIND ANY PARTY IN MIDEAST
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CONFLICT IF IT MADE PRE-EMPTIVE ATTACK. THERE WAS ALSO DISCUSSION

OF GOI 2.5 BILLION DOLLAR AID REQUEST AND NEED FOR PALESTINIAN HOMELAND. PERES EXPLAINED AID REQUIREMENT, RESERVATIONS ABOUT POSSIBILITIES OF SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS IN NEGOTIATIONS AND VIEW THAT PALESTINIAN STATE IN WEST BANK: GAZA WOULD HAVE CATASTROPHIC RESULTS. HE ASSURED SENATOR, NONETHELESS, THAT THERE WAS NO DANGER OF ISRAELI MISCALCULATION OF SITUATION LEADING TO WAR, THAT ISRAEL WOULD NOT TAKE PRE-EMPTIVE MILITARY ACTION AND REMAINED COMMITTED TO STE-BY-STEP NEGOTIATION PROCESS. END SUMMARY.

3. ISRAELI AID REQUEST. SENATOR RAISED ISSUED OF ISRAELI 2.5 BILLION DOLLAR AID REQUEST. WHY, HE ASKED, SHOULD US APPROPRIATE SUCH LARGE SUMS WHEN THERE WERE SO MANY COMPETING REQUIREMENTS FOR THEIR USE? ISRAEL HAD CAPACITY TO WAGE WAR FOR AT LEAST 21 DAYS. HOW WAS AID REQUEST RELATED TO PEACE? HOW SHOULD HE REPLY TO QUESTIONS IN SENATE AS TO US NATIONAL INTERESTS THAT WERE INVOLVED? PERES EXPLAINED THAT MUCH OF REQUEST CAME SIMPLY FROM HUGE COSTS OF ACQUIRING SOPHISTICATED US EQUIPMENT(WHICH HE POINTED OUT WAS MORE EXPENSIVE THAN SOVIET EQUIPMENT). ISRAELI PURCHASES OF F-15'S ALON WOULD COST OVER 600 MILLION DOLLARS. DRAWING ANALOGY SEVERAL TIMES TO PEARL HARBOR, PERES SAID ISRAEL COULD NEVER PERMIT ITSELF TO BE IN POSITION OF BEING UNABLE TO SURVIVE MILITARY ATTACK. EVEN WITH POST YOM KIPPUR WAR CHANGES, HOWEVER, ISRAEL COULD BE SATISFIED WITH 3:1 ADVERSE RATIO TO ITS NEIGHBORS. BUT THIS COST INCREASING QUANTITIES OF MONEY (HE ENUMERATED COSTS OF TANKS, HIGH-SIGHTING EQUIPMENT, MORE SOPHISTICATED EQUIPMENT TO PROTECT ISRAELI COMMUNICATIONS IN ELECTRONIC WARFARE).

4. AS TO US NATIONAL INTEREST FACTOR, PERES SAID (AFTER ASSERTING THAT US ALLIES IN MEDITERRANEAN WERE INCREASINGLY UNRELIABLE) THAT IF ISRAEL WAS ALLOWED TO GO UNDER US PRESTIGE WOULD SUFFER, US WOULD CONTINUE TO EXPERIENCE DIFFICULTIES IN ITS RELATIONS WITH OIL PRODUCERS AND, MOST IMPORTANTLY, THIS WOULD OPEN WAY TO ONLY OTHER SUPER POWER TO ESTABLISH HEGEMONY IN VITAL ME AREA. THE SENATOR QUESTIONED SOME OF THIS REASONING AND PERES SAID THAT HE WAS CERTAIN THAT ISRAEL'S MILITARY AID REQUEST COULD BE CUT IN HALF IN EGYPT SHOWED GENUINE WILL FOR PEACE, FOR EXAMPLE BY AGREEING TO RELAX ITS ECONOMIC BOYCOTT.

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5. JORDAN. SENATOR PERCY HAD EXPRESSED HIS VERY HIGH REGARD FOR HUSSEIN AND PERES AGREED. WHEN IT WAS SUGGESTED THAT FEELING IN US WAS GROWING THAT ISRAEL HAD MISSED OPPORTUNITY TO NEGOTIATE WITH KING LAST SUMMER, PERES SAID ISRAEL HAD ALWAYS BEEN READY FOR PEACE WITH HUSSEIN. HE CLAIMED ISRAEL HAD OFFERED TO RETURN JERICHO AND SURROUNDING AREA TO HUSSEIN, WHO DECLINED BECAUSE HE BELIEVED IT WOULD

IMMEDIATELY COME UNDER PLO DOMINATION. PERES SAID
ISREL STILL HOPED TO NEGOTIATE WEST BANK ISSUE WITH KING,
BUT THIS WOULD REQUIRE TIME AND PATIENCE.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 TEL AVIV 0553

EXDIS

ROME PLEASE PASS SENATOR PERCY

XGV LEBANON. TURNING TO LEBANON, PERES SAID THAT DESPITE
TENSIONS ON BORDER, ISRAELIS WERE IN CONSTANT TOUCH WITH
LEBANESE WHO UNDERSTOOD PERFECTLY WELL WHAT ISRAEL'S
PURPOSES WERE. SENATOR PERCY EXPRESSED CONSIDERABLE
SKEPTICISM ABOUT THIS, SINCE IT WAS CERTAINLY NOT WHAT HE
HAD JUST HEARD IN HIS TALKS WITH LEBANESE LEADERS. PERES
SEEMED TO GIVE LITTLE WEIGHT TO PROBLEMS LEBANESE FACE. HE
SAID LEBANESE HAD WITHIN PAST WEEK AGAIN REJECTED ISRAELI
PROPOSAL TO ERECT PARALLEL SECURITY FENCE ON THEIR SIDE OF
BORDER AND TO MAINTAIN JOINT PATROLS.

7. EGYPT. SENATOR PERCY SAID HE BELIEVED THAT SADAT WANTED
AND NEEDED TO REACH PEACE WITH ISRAEL THROUGH STEP-BY-STEP
PROCESS. HOWEVER, BOTH INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL PRESSURES ON
SADAT WERE VERY GREAT AND THE PRESENT OPPORTUNITY MIGHT NOT
LAST LONG. AFTER SOME EXPRESSIONS OF DISTRUST ABOUT DEPENDABILITY
OF ARABS IN OBSERVING AGREEMENTS, PERES SEEMED TO ACCEPT

SENATOR'S POINT. HE SAID ISRAEL FOUND GREAT DILEMMA IN NEGOTIATIONS--THEY WERE POLITICALLY WISE, BUT NOT MILITARILY. IF EGYPT WERE PREPARED TO NEGOTIATE PEACE WITH ISRAEL, CONFIDENTIAL

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HOWEVER, SHE COULD HAVE ALL HER TERRITORY BACK. THERE WAS SOME INCONCLUSIVE DISCUSSION OF GENUINNESS OF EGYPTUS INTENTIONS TO REOPEN CANAL DURING WHICH ISRAELIS PRESENT ALL STRESSED THAT ISRAEL WOULD NOT PAY AGAIN IN TERRITORY FOR WHAT HAD ALREADY BEEN AGREED IN INITIAL DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENTS LAST YEAR.

8. SYRIA. SENATOR MENTIONED HIS VISIT TO GOLAN AND KUNEITRA. SYRIANS HAD TOLD HIM THEY COULD NOT RE-ESTABLISH NORMAL LIFE IN AREA UNTIL THEY HAD RECEIVED ISRAELI MAPS SHOWING WHERE THE MINFIELDS WERE. HAD ISRAELIS LIVED UP TO THEIR OBLIGATIONS IN THIS RESPECT? PERES DEFENSIVELY RECOUNTED HOW SYRIA HAD ILLEGALLY PLACED HEAVY MORTARS IN THEIR THINNED-OUT ZONE, ETC, BUT ADDED THAT IF REQUESTED BY UN GENERAL SULASONO TO PROVIDE MAPS, ISRAEL WOULD DO SO, EVEN IF HEAVY MORTARS WERE NOT WITHDRAWN.

9. PALESTINE. SENATOR SAID HE HAD MET WITH PALESTINIANS THROUGHOUT ARAB COUNTRIES VISITED. HE HAD BEEN IMPRESSED WITH THEIR SINCERITY, QUALITY AND ABILITY. THOUGH HE HAD NOT MET ARAFAT, HE THOUGHT THAT THERE WAS MODERATE FACTION OF PLO THAT WAS TRYING TO BE REALISTIC. ISRAEL MUST RECOGNIZE RIGHTS OF PALESTINIANS AND THAT THEY WANTED THEIR LAND BACK. TIME WOULD NOT BE HELPFUL TO ISRAEL IF PRESENT OPPORTUNITIES WERE MISSED AND POTENTIAL SUCCESSORS TO ARAFAT AND SADAT COULD BE EVEN LESS EASY TO DEAL WITH. THOUGH AGREEING WITH LATTER POINT, PERES MADE AN EMPHATIC ARGUMENT THAT CREATION OF PALESTINIAN STATE ON WEST BANK/GAZA WOULD BE CATASTROPHIC. ARAFAT WAS LEFTIST, PLO WAS NOW GETTING ITS ARMS FROM SOVIETS, ANY PALESTINIAN STATE WOULD END UP TOTALLY SUBSERVIENT TO RUSSIA. SENATOR SHOULD REALIZE THAT THIS WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR ISRAEL. FOR EXAMPLE, STRELLA MISSILES LAUNCHED FROM WEST BANK COULD ENDANGER AIRCRAFT ALMOST ANYWHERE IN ISRAEL. EXPRESSING UNDERSTANDING FOR SOME OF THESE CONCERNS, SENATOR PERCY NEVERTHELESS SAID HE DID NOT AGREE THAT PALESTINIAN STATE WOULD NECESSARILY BE ACTIVELY HOSTILE TO ISRAEL AND THAT ISRAELIS SHOULD SEEK NOW TO WORK AT CREATION OF SITUATION WHERE MODERATES, RATHER THAN RADICALS, WOULD BE IN CHARGE. PERES REPLIED THAT ISRAEL SIMPLY DID NOT HAVE A SUFFICIENTLY LARGE BACKYARD TO MAKE MISTAKES THAT COULD PROVE FATAL. CONFIDENTIAL

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(IN RARE BURST OF EXASPERTION, AT ONE POINT IN ABOVE CONVERSATION, PERES ASKED WHY THERE WAS NO COMPARABLE US INTEREST IN POSITION OF KURDS IN IRAQ, TO WHICH SENATOR REPLIED THAT ONE MUST APPROACH SUCH QUESTIONS PRAGMATICALLY.)

10. THE CONVERSATION CLOSED WITH THE SENATOR STRESSING HIS OWN RECORD OF FRIENDSHIP AND SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL BUT EMPHASIZING AGAIN THE NEED TO MOVE AHEAD TOWARDS PEACE. HE SAID HE WOULD BE LEAVING MIDDLE EAST WITH TWO MAIN SENTIMENTS--1) FRUSTRATION AND 2) ADMIRATION FOR THOSE WHO WERE TRYING SO HARD TO DEAL WITH THE INCREDIBLY COMPLEX PROBLEMS INVOLVED.

11. COMMENT: SENATOR DID NOT HAVE OPPORTUNITY TO REVIEW FOREGOING BEFORE DEPARTURE. ADDRESSEES SHOULD KEEP IN MIND, THEREFORE, THAT IT IS SUBJECT TO REVISION AFTER SENATOR PERCY'S REVIEW.

VELIOTES

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